

**In the Claims:**

The claims are as follows.

1-34. (Canceled)

35. (Original) A method, comprising executing an algorithm by a processor of a computer system, said executing said algorithm comprising sorting S sequences of binary bits in ascending or descending order of a value associated with each sequence and in a time period denoted as a sorting execution time, said S sequences being stored in a memory device of the computer system prior to said sorting, S being at least 2, each sequence of the S sequences comprising K contiguous fields denoted left to right as  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_K$  with corresponding field widths of  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$ , said sorting comprising the steps of:

designating S memory areas of the memory device as  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_S$ ;

setting an output index  $P = 0$  and a field index  $Q = 0$ ;

providing a node E having S elements stored therein, said S elements consisting of the S sequences or S pointers respectively pointing to the S sequences; and

executing program code, including determining a truth or falsity of an assertion that the elements in node E collectively include or point to no more than one unique sequence U of the S sequences, and if said assertion is determined to be false:

then generating C child nodes from node E, each child node including all elements in node E having a unique value of field  $F_{Q+1}$ , said child nodes denoted as  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  having associated field  $F_{Q+1}$  values of  $V_0, V_1, \dots, V_{C-1}$ , said child nodes  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$

being sequenced such that  $V_0 < V_1 < \dots < V_{C-1}$ , said generating followed by incrementing Q by 1, said incrementing Q followed by iterating from an index  $I=0$  to  $I=C-1$  in steps of 1, wherein iteration I includes setting  $E=E_I$  followed by executing the program code recursively at a next level of recursion for the node E;

else for each element in node E: incrementing P by 1, next storing in  $A_p$  either U or the element pointing to U, and lastly if the program code at all of said levels of recursion has not been fully executed then resuming execution of said program code at the most previous level of recursion at which the program code was partially but not fully executed else exiting the algorithm.

36. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein said sorting does not include comparing a value of a first sequence of the S sequences with a value of a second sequence of the S sequences.

37. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear function of a sequence length comprised by each sequence of the S sequences.

38. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear or less than linear function of S.

39. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the sorting execution time is essentially independent of an extent to which the S sequences are ordered in the memory device, prior to said sorting, with respect to said associated values.

40. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the sorting execution time is a decreasing function of a data density of the S sequences.

41. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the S elements consist of the S pointers, wherein the node E having the S sequences prior to said sorting includes a linked list that comprises the S pointers, and wherein each child node having pointers therein includes a linked list that comprises said pointers therein.

42. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the S sequences each represent a variable-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2=...=W_K$  = one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

43. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the S sequences each represent a fixed-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2=...=W_K$  = one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

44. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length words such that each of the S words has N binary bits, wherein N is at least 2.

45. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein the S words each represent an integer.

46. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein the method further comprises determining a leftmost significant bit position of the S words collectively, and wherein the leftmost bit position of field  $F_1$  is the leftmost significant bit position of the S words collectively.

47. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein the S words each represent a floating point number having the following fields contiguously ordered from left to right: a sign field, an exponent field, and a mantissa field.

48. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein generating the C child nodes from node E comprises performing (M AND X) or (X AND M) with a mask M for each sequence X in node E, wherein the mask M is keyed to the field  $F_{Q+1}$ , and wherein the bit positions of the mask M relating to the field  $F_{Q+1}$  each have a 1 bit, and wherein the remaining bit positions of the mask M each have a 0 bit.

49. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein S is at least 1000, and wherein  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$  is such that the sorting execution time is less than a Quicksort execution time for sorting the S sequences via execution of a Quicksort sorting algorithm by said processor.

50. (Previously presented) A computer program product, comprising:

a computer usable medium having a computer readable program code embodied therein, said computer readable program code comprising an algorithm for sorting  $S$  input sequences of binary bits in ascending or descending order of a value associated with each sequence and in a time period denoted as a sorting execution time, said  $S$  sequences being stored in a memory device of a computer system prior to said sorting,  $S$  being at least 2, each sequence of the  $S$  sequences comprising  $K$  contiguous fields denoted left to right as  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_K$  with corresponding field widths of  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$ , said algorithm adapted to perform said sorting by executing the steps of:

designating  $S$  memory areas of the memory device as  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_S$ ;

setting an output index  $P = 0$  and a field index  $Q = 0$ ;

providing a node  $E$  having  $S$  elements stored therein, said  $S$  elements consisting of the  $S$  sequences or  $S$  pointers respectively pointing to the  $S$  sequences; and

executing program code, including determining a truth or falsity of an assertion that the elements in node  $E$  collectively include or point to no more than one unique sequence  $U$  of the  $S$  sequences, and if said assertion is determined to be false:

then generating  $C$  child nodes from node  $E$ , each child node including all elements in node  $E$  having a unique value of field  $F_{Q+1}$ , said child nodes denoted as  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  having associated field  $F_{Q+1}$  values of  $V_0, V_1, \dots, V_{C-1}$ , said child nodes  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  being sequenced such that  $V_0 < V_1 < \dots < V_{C-1}$ , said generating followed by incrementing  $Q$  by 1, said incrementing  $Q$  followed by iterating from an index  $I=0$  to  $I=C-1$  in steps of 1, wherein iteration  $I$  includes setting  $E=E_I$  followed by executing the program code

recursively at a next level of recursion for the node E;

else for each element in node E: incrementing P by 1, next storing in  $A_p$  either U or the element pointing to U, and lastly if the program code at all of said levels of recursion has not been fully executed then resuming execution of said program code at the most previous level of recursion at which the program code was partially but not fully executed else exiting the algorithm.

51. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein said algorithm is not adapted to execute comparing a value of a first sequence of the S sequences with a value of a second sequence of the S sequences.

52. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear function of a sequence length comprised by each sequence of the S sequences.

53. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear or less than linear function of S.

54. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the sorting execution time is essentially independent of an extent to which the S sequences are ordered in the memory device, prior to said sorting, with respect to said associated values.

55. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the sorting execution time is a

decreasing function of a data density of the S sequences.

56. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the S elements consist of the S pointers, wherein the node E having the S sequences prior to said sorting includes a linked list that comprises the S pointers, and wherein each child node having pointers therein includes a linked list that comprises said pointers therein.

57. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the S sequences each represent a variable-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

58. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the S sequences each represent a fixed-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

59. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length words such that each of the S words has N binary bits, wherein N is at least 2.

60. (Original) The computer program product of claim 59, wherein the S words each represent an integer.

61. (Original) The computer program product of claim 59, wherein the algorithm is further adapted to execute determining a leftmost significant bit position of the S words collectively, and wherein the leftmost bit position of field  $F_1$  is the leftmost significant bit position of the S words collectively.

62. (Original) The computer program product of claim 59, wherein the S words each represent a floating point number having the following fields contiguously ordered from left to right: a sign field, an exponent field, and a mantissa field.

63. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein generating the C child nodes from node E comprises performing (M AND X) or (X AND M) with a mask M for each sequence X in node E, wherein the mask M is keyed to the field  $F_{Q+1}$ , and wherein the bit positions of the mask M relating to the field  $F_{Q+1}$  each have a 1 bit, and wherein the remaining bit positions of the mask M each have a 0 bit.

64. (Original) The computer program product of claim 50, wherein S is at least 1000, and wherein  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$  is such that the sorting execution time is less than a Quicksort execution time for sorting the S sequences via execution of a Quicksort sorting algorithm by said processor.



65. (Original) A method, comprising executing an algorithm by a processor of a computer system, said executing said algorithm comprising sorting S sequences of binary bits in ascending or descending order of a value associated with each sequence and in a time period denoted as a sorting execution time, said S sequences being stored in a memory device of the computer system prior to said sorting, S being at least 2, each sequence of the S sequences comprising K contiguous fields denoted left to right as  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_K$  with corresponding field widths of  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$ , said sorting comprising the steps of:

designating S memory areas of the memory device as  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_S$ ;

setting an output index  $P = 0$  and a field index  $Q = 0$ ;

providing a node E having S elements stored therein, said S elements consisting of the S sequences or S pointers respectively pointing to the S sequences; and

counter-controlled looping through program code, said looping including iteratively executing said program code within nested loops, said executing said program code including determining a truth or falsity of an assertion that the elements in node E collectively include or point to no more than one unique sequence U of the S sequences, and if said assertion is determined to be false:

then generating C child nodes from node E, each child node including all elements in node E having a unique value of field  $F_{Q+1}$ , said child nodes denoted as  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  having associated field  $F_{Q+1}$  values of  $V_0, V_1, \dots, V_{C-1}$ , said child nodes  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  being sequenced such that  $V_0 < V_1 < \dots < V_{C-1}$ ; said generating followed by incrementing Q by 1, said incrementing Q followed by iterating from an index  $I=0$  to  $I=C-1$  in steps of 1, wherein iteration I includes setting  $E=E_I$  followed by returning to said counter-controlled

looping;

else for each element in node E: incrementing P by 1, next storing in  $A_p$  either U or the element pointing to U, and lastly if all iterations of said outermost loop have not been executed then returning to said counter-controlled looping else exiting from said algorithm.

66. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein said sorting does not include comparing a value of a first sequence of the S sequences with a value of a second sequence of the S sequences.

67. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear function of a sequence length comprised by each sequence of the S sequences.

68. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear or less than linear function of S.

69. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the sorting execution time is essentially independent of an extent to which the S sequences are ordered in the memory device, prior to said sorting, with respect to said associated values.

70. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the sorting execution time is a decreasing function of a data density of the S sequences.

71. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the S sequences each represent a variable-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

72. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the S sequences each represent a fixed-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

73. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length integers such that each of the S integers has N binary bits, wherein N is at least 2.

74. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length floating point numbers, each of said floating point numbers having the following fields contiguously ordered from left to right: a sign field, an exponent field, and a mantissa field.

75. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein S is at least 1000, and wherein  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$  is such that the sorting execution time is less than a Quicksort execution time for sorting the S sequences via execution of a Quicksort sorting algorithm by said processor.

76. (Previously presented) A computer program product, comprising:

a computer usable medium having a computer readable program code embodied therein, said computer readable program code comprising an algorithm for sorting  $S$  input sequences of binary bits in ascending or descending order of a value associated with each sequence and in a time period denoted as a sorting execution time, said  $S$  sequences being stored in a memory device of a computer system prior to said sorting,  $S$  being at least 2, each sequence of the  $S$  sequences comprising  $K$  contiguous fields denoted left to right as  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_K$  with corresponding field widths of  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$ , said algorithm adapted to perform said sorting by executing the steps of:

designating  $S$  memory areas of the memory device as  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_S$ ;

setting an output index  $P = 0$  and a field index  $Q = 0$ ;

providing a node  $E$  having  $S$  elements stored therein, said  $S$  elements consisting of the  $S$  sequences or  $S$  pointers respectively pointing to the  $S$  sequences; and

counter-controlled looping through program code, said looping including iteratively executing said program code within nested loops, said executing said program code including determining a truth or falsity of an assertion that the elements in node  $E$  collectively include or point to no more than one unique sequence  $U$  of the  $S$  sequences, and if said assertion is determined to be false:

then generating  $C$  child nodes from node  $E$ , each child node including all elements in node  $E$  having a unique value of field  $F_{Q+1}$ , said child nodes denoted as  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  having associated field  $F_{Q+1}$  values of  $V_0, V_1, \dots, V_{C-1}$ , said child nodes  $E_0, E_1, \dots, E_{C-1}$  being sequenced such that  $V_0 < V_1 < \dots < V_{C-1}$ ; said generating followed by incrementing  $Q$  by 1,

said incrementing Q followed by iterating from an index  $I=0$  to  $I=C-1$  in steps of 1, wherein iteration I includes setting  $E=E_i$  followed by returning to said counter-controlled looping;

else for each element in node E: incrementing P by 1, next storing in  $A_p$  either U or the element pointing to U, and lastly if all iterations of said outermost loop have not been executed then returning to said counter-controlled looping else exiting from said algorithm.

77. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein said algorithm is not adapted to execute comparing a value of a first sequence of the S sequences with a value of a second sequence of the S sequences.

78. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear function of a sequence length comprised by each sequence of the S sequences.

79. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the sorting execution time is a linear or less than linear function of S.

80. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the sorting execution time is essentially independent of an extent to which the S sequences are ordered in the memory device, prior to said sorting, with respect to said associated values.

81. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the sorting execution time is a decreasing function of a data density of the S sequences.

82. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the S sequences each represent a variable-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

83. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the S sequences each represent a fixed-length character string, wherein each of the S character strings consists of the K contiguous fields, wherein K is a sequence-dependent variable subject to  $W_1=W_2= \dots =W_K =$  one byte consisting of a fixed number of binary bits for representing one character.

84. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length integers such that each of the S integers has N binary bits, wherein N is at least 2.

85. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein the S sequences consist of S fixed-length floating point numbers, each of said floating point numbers having the following fields contiguously ordered from left to right: a sign field, an exponent field, and a mantissa field.

86. (Original) The computer program product of claim 76, wherein S is at least 1000, and wherein  $W_1, W_2, \dots, W_K$  is such that the sorting execution time is less than a Quicksort execution time for sorting the S sequences via execution of a Quicksort sorting algorithm by said processor.